



Ruling a Quarter of Mankind: Chiang and Mao

Paul H. Tai

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For nearly a half of the 20th century, Chinese leaders Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong ruled a population accounting for a quarter of mankind. They fought two wars involving millions of soldiers, participated in three epochal revolutions, went through disasters of almost biblical proportions, and confronted imperialist predators threatening to conquer their land. Yet, by 1945, Chiang had elevated China to the world's fourth greatest power; by 1972, Mao had advanced the country further to the third greatest power; and by the mid1970s when they died, they had set the foundation for an emerging superpower in the 21st century. While achieving these deeds, they also committed gross mistakes. Going beyond merely labeling their rule as dictatorship, this book compares thoroughly the two leader's ruling skills. It probes deep into their two primary means of governance, what Mao graphically called, "The Barrel of the Gun and the Barrel of the Pen." It exposes, in detail, their little known supplementary means of governance—a whole arsenal of power plays that are grouped as "the art of the possible." It concludes with a judicious assessment of their accomplishments and failures. Written in a flowing narrative style and with vivid illustrative episodes, this book makes an immensely readable volume.



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